Greetings and farewells in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, I want to provide a case study of two largely phatic speech acts in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: greetings and farewells. They function as openings and closings of interactions between speakers, and they also serve to establish and re-establish the speakers' relationship with each other in terms of their respective places in the social hierarchy, their familiarity and their respective power.

Literary language may, of course, differ considerably from the spoken language of the day. This study, therefore, does not make any claims about how greetings and farewells were used in Middle English in general. It merely focuses on the use of these speech acts in the fictional world of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It is tempting to perceive the *Canterbury Tales* as a magnificent, unified whole with a well-balanced variety of diverse genres, 'as a wonderfully complex linked set of short stories, wholly conceived as such in all its details' (Meyer-Lee 2008: 1). But, as Meyer-Lee is quick to point out, such a view is an 'utter fiction'. It is a fiction that is based on the monumental editorial undertaking of the early editors of Chaucer's work going back to the fifteenth century and which still lives on in such outstanding editions as *The Riverside Chaucer*.

In the historical medieval reality there is no such unity (see also Matthews 1999: 162–86). There are over eighty extant manuscripts, which contain part or all of what today is considered to be the *Canterbury Tales*, some containing only a single tale or mere fragments (Benson 1987: 1,118; but see also Robinson 2003: 126). In addition there are six early prints that may go back to additional manuscripts that have not survived. The two most important manuscripts are the Hengwrt 154 (National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth) and the Ellesmere 26 C 9 (Henry E. Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California). Literary interpretations of the tales often depend on the order of specific editions (see, for instance, Phillips 2000: 14–16, who lists some relevant examples of such interpretations). From a pragmatic point of view, we may also be interested to know more about Chaucer's audience. Did he write for a highly educated, middle-class audience or for princes

and courtiers (Pearsall 1992a: 178–85)? The complexity of the historical manuscript reality, however, defies easy answers to such questions, and the unity and coherence of modern editions should not be taken as a source for speculation on the answers to such questions.

However, whether in their fictional unity or in fragments, the *Canterbury Tales* is a collection of tales with a frame narrative and numerous narratives within narratives, i.e. stories told not only by the characters in the frame but also by the characters in the individual tales and even by characters that occur in such embedded stories. As such, they offer a rich world for pragmatic studies, even if it is a world that has been mediated from Chaucer's manuscript reality to our modern scholarly editions of the *Tales*.

Recent research in the history of specific speech acts has revealed a number of theoretical and methodological problems. One of the most obvious problems is the comparability of a particular speech act across time. On what level is a medieval insult the same as a modern insult (Jucker and Taavitsainen 2000)? Is a compliment of introduction in the eighteenth century really comparable to a compliment on the delicious food at a present-day dinner invitation (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2008)? Such questions have been discussed as the problem of a *tertium comparationis* (e.g. Krzeszowski 1984). Can we trace specific illocutions or perlocutions across different stages in the development of a language? Does the use of a specific speech-act verb, such as 'insult' or 'compliment' or their earlier cognates guarantee a constant illocution across time so that a comparison really compares comparable entities? On a first approximation, greetings and farewells seem particularly well suited for a historical comparison because they can be easily located as the speech acts that open or close a conversation, and thus their *tertium comparationis* seems to be fairly solid. But the analysis will show that the realities are more complex. What appear to be greetings and farewells in the fictional world of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* differ not only in their realisation from present-day greetings and farewells but also in their basic function.

2. Greetings and farewells

The speech acts of greetings and farewells have received a considerable amount of attention in the relevant literature. Searle (1969: 67) described greetings as devoid of propositional content and lacking in sincerity conditions. The only condition for a successful greeting was, according to him, the extra-linguistic context in which the speaker and the addressee have just met each other. Eisenstein *et al.* (1996: 92) point out that, in their data of native speakers of American English, greetings often convey feelings and thus are not the empty formulas suggested by Searle. Feelings and emotions can even be explicitly formulated ('Oh, it's nice to see you') or they can be expressed in a warm tone of voice. Eisenstein *et al.* (1996: 93–6) distinguish between different types of greetings. In the 'greeting on the run', acquaintances see

each other and exchange nothing more than perhaps a smile and a brief phatic statement or a formulaic question that does not require a response. In a 'speedy greeting', some information is exchanged, but it begins and ends abruptly. 'The chat' is a somewhat longer version of a speedy greeting involving a short discussion. 'The long greeting' is used to re-establish bonds between the speakers after longer periods of separation. It is characterised by several individual greetings that are separated by narrative sequences. 'The intimate greeting' is used by people who know each other well and can leave almost everything either implied or unsaid, or it may consist almost entirely of non-verbal gestures. 'The all-business greeting' is typical for situations in which the interlocutors, e.g. an agent and a client who do not have a social relationship, start an interaction without any phatic talk. In 'the introductory greeting', two people who have not previously met start an interaction. Further types are 'service encounter greetings' or 're-greetings'. On the basis of this classification and their data, Eisenstein *et al.* show that greetings can be very simple, consisting of a single speech act, or they can be complex and extended. They can be merely phatic and formulaic or they can be meaningful and creative.

Duranti (1997, who investigated greetings in Western Samoa, also makes the point that greeting sequences need not be devoid of propositional content. He proposed the following six features for identifying greeting sequences (Duranti 1997: 67):

(i) near-boundary occurrence;
(ii) establishment of a shared perceptual field;
(iii) adjacency pair format;
(iv) relative predictability of form and content;
(v) implicit establishment of a spatio-temporal unit of interaction; and
(vi) identification of the interlocutor as a distinct being worth recognising.

Even without a detailed discussion of these features, it is clear that Duranti focuses on a somewhat more restricted set of speech events than Eisenstein *et al.* (1996). In several Samoan greetings, form and content are entirely creative and not predictable, and in many cases the adjacency pair format is extended to an interaction between two or more interlocutors over several turns. But, even so, Samoans use greeting sequences to accomplish a variety of social acts. They may, for instance, search for new information, compliment the addressee or sanction social behaviour.

Rash (2004), on the other hand, stresses the formulaic nature of greetings in Swiss German. She also distinguishes between 'passing greetings' and 'conversation openings' (2004: 51), where passing greetings are used when passing people in the street (especially in rural areas), on mountain paths or in shops. In her interviews with native speakers of Swiss German, she found a great concern for greetings, which are seen as politeness rituals that are important as signs of respect and as devices strengthening social cohesion.

Thus it appears that not only in Present-day English but also in other languages greeting sequences can be brief and formulaic but they can also be extended and creative. They can be largely phatic and devoid of propositional content but they can also be multifunctional with other meaningful social activities. And they can be short adjacency pairs or longer sequences extending over several turns.

This general picture is further reinforced by diachronic studies of greetings and farewells. Such historical studies include Stroebe (1911) on Old Germanic greetings; Lebsanft (1988) on greetings in Old French; Hauser (1998) on greetings and farewells in Swiss German from the fifteenth century to the present day; Grzega (2008) on greetings in English; and Arnovick (1999: ch. 6) on *goodbye* in English. Lebsanft (1988) and Grzega (2008) both use a lexical approach and provide large inventories of greetings. Grzega draws his greetings from the entire history of the English language, and Lebsanft provides a full inventory of lexical elements in Old French that are used to talk about greetings and that are used to actually greet.

Lebsanft (1988: 18) discusses the degree of formulaicity or phraseological fixity of the greetings in his data. He distinguishes between syntactic fixity ('*materielle Fixiertheit*') (choice and order of elements) and semantic fixity ('*inhaltliche Fixiertheit*') (meaning of the phrase derivable directly from the meanings of its parts). It appears that Old French greetings are only marginally formulaic. In Old French, speakers choose and combine the individual elements freely, and the greetings can be interpreted on the basis of their individual elements. Typical examples are *Dieus vos saut* or *Dieus vos gart de aucune rien*.

Lebsanft (1988) distinguishes carefully between verbal greetings and nonverbal greetings in order to describe the different lexical means in Old French to talk about them, and he distinguishes between address greetings (*Begrüßung*) and leave-taking (*Abschied*), for which German offers *Grüßen* 'greet' as a superordinate expression. In the third part of his book, Lebsanft describes the pragmatics of Old French greetings. He discusses in detail who greets whom, the number and sequence of turns in greeting exchanges, the return greeting and the question of who greets first (Lebsanft 1988: 245).

Hauser (1998) traces greeting rituals in Swiss German from the fifteenth century to the present day. He particularly focuses on the interaction between greetings and face work, and he discerns a decline of politeness in the twentieth century, which he ascribes to the increased demographic mobility and the influence of the mass media. He distinguishes a great range of different greetings, especially for Present-day Swiss German, including greetings that are accompanied by special gestures and variations of handshakes, such as the Zurich greeting, the skateboarder's greeting, the techno greeting, the pot-smoker's greeting, the snowboarder's greeting and the hip-hopper greeting (Hauser 1998: 164).

Stroebe (1911) observes that in Old English *wes hal* with syntactic variants, together with *wilcuman* or *þu art wilcuma*, were the most common greeting forms. Christian greetings, such as *Deo gratias*, on the other hand seem to have been rare in Old English. They only emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Grzega (2008: 191) notes that Middle English displays a greater range of greetings, but they do not seem to be fossilised. Many phrases occur only once or a few times. The more formulaic greetings in Old and Middle English fall into four different classes. In Old English, there are attention getters and wishes for well-being. And in Middle English, there are wishes for a good time and enquiries about the addressee's health. Various speech acts that implicitly also served as greetings turned into pure greetings.

Arnovick (1999: ch. 6) provides a detailed diachronic study of one specific leave-taking formula, Present-day English *goodbye*. On the basis of her data culled from the Chadwyck-Healey electronic corpus, she dates the first occurrences back to the late fifteenth century and thus antedates the *Oxford English Dictonary*'s earliest attested examples from the mid to late sixteenth century (Arnovick 1999: 98). She shows that in Early Modern English the phrase *God be with you* was an explicit blessing and an implicit greeting, which in the course of time turned into the strictly secular greeting that it is today with the main purpose of structuring the conversation in a polite way.

On the basis of the research summarised above, we should expect greetings and farewells in Chaucer's Middle English to show considerable variability. All these studies have shown both the diversity and creativity of greetings and farewells and at the same time the tendency for certain forms to become formulaic and ritualistic. In earlier periods, religious invocations at the beginning and at the end of conversations were common and it can be expected that this tendency will also surface in Chaucer's use of greetings and farewells in his *Canterbury Tales*.

3. Analysis

In this section, I will analyse the constitutive elements of greetings and farewells in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. For the purpose of this chapter, all greeting and farewell sequences were manually located in fragments 1 to 9 of the *Canterbury Tales*, excluding only fragment number 10 with the Parson's Prologue and Tale, and Chaucer's Retraction.[1] The search included

[1] The search was based on *The Riverside Chaucer* (Benson 1987). The following quotations are also taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*. References are given in the format fragment number in Roman numerals and line numbers in Arabic numerals. The abbreviations for individual tales follow *The Riverside Chaucer* (Benson 1987: 779). My thanks go to Lucien Palser for considerable help with the data and to Daniela Landert and Päivi Pahta for valuable comments on a draft version of this chapter. The usual disclaimers apply.

Table 16.1 *Recurring elements in greetings and farewells in Chaucer's* Canterbury Tales *(individual speech acts may contain several or none of these elements)*

	Greetings (total n = 67)	Farewells (total n = 73)
Well-wishing	8	23
Identification	47	15
Blessing	8	14
Interjection	19	3
Leave-taking		7
Dismissal		14

direct speech exchanged at the opening or closing of an encounter between characters in the narration and the descriptions of such openings and closings. Speech acts in narratives can occur in direct speech ascribed to individual characters, they can be reported indirectly or they can be merely described by the narrator. Conversations often start *in medias res* without any speech act that we would want to label as a greeting even if it is obvious that the characters have only just met; or the conversation breaks off without any concluding words even if it is clear that the characters are parting. Often, the narrator records only the greeting or leave-taking sequence of one participant and does not give the addressee's response.

There are a total of sixty-seven greetings and seventy-three farewells in the data, of which fifteen and eighteen cases, respectively, are indirect descriptions without any direct speech. The remaining sequences record the words of at least one of the characters greeting or bidding farewell. They reveal a large range of different formulations and thus confirm Grzega's (2008: 191) claim that Middle English greetings show very little fossilisation. Many greetings and farewells are creative, some of them are relatively long, extending over many lines, but there are also very brief ones consisting of one or two words only. The main elements that regularly occur both in greetings and in farewells are the following: well-wishing, identification of the addressee, blessings and interjections. Farewells also often include leave-takings and dismissals (see table 16.1). The categories will be described in the following.

The figures show that some kind of identification of the addressee is the most important element in the greetings. It occurs in forty-seven out of sexty-seven cases. In farewells, this category is less important with only fifteen occurrences in seventy-three farewells. The categories well-wishing and blessing occur only occasionally in greetings and slightly more often in farewells. Interjections occur more frequently in greetings and only very rarely in farewells. The last two categories, leave-taking and dismissal, are obviously restricted to farewells.

3.1 Well-wishing

The well-wishing sequences in greetings may consist of an enquiry after the addressee's health or a formulaic wish for a good time of the day (Grzega 2008: 185, 184). Thomas's wife addresses friar John with 'Ey, maister, welcome be ye, by Seint John!/ . . . how fare ye, hertely?' (SumT III 1800–1). And Aleyn greets the miller with the words 'Al hayl, Symond, y-fayth!/ Hou fares thy faire doghter and thy wyf?' (RvT I 4022–3).

In the farewell sequences, the well-wishing often consists of the formulaic *farewell*, or the equally formulaic *have good day*. Aleyn – after having spent the night in her bed – bids the miller's daughter farewell with the words: 'Fare weel, Malyne, sweete wight!/ The day is come; I may no lenger byde;/ But everemo, wher so I go or ryde,/ I is thyn awen clerk, swa have I seel!' (RvT I 4236–9). Don John in the Shipman's Tale bids farewell with the words: 'Farewel, have good day!' (ShipT VII 320).

The *farewell* formula appears to be the most formulaic element that occurs either in greetings or in farewells, and indeed it still gives the entire speech act its name. It is still a 'common English parting salutation' (Arnovick 1999: 96) with a form that has been used since Middle English. In the *Canterbury Tales*, it is to some extent still creative. It is sometimes broken up as in 'fareth now weel' or 'fare now wel' (e.g. MLT II 1159; MerT IV 1688; ShipT VII 279) or in 'Lat hym fare wel' (WBPro III 501), in which the two elements still function as a verb and an adverb. The full form has not undergone lexicalisation yet, but it also appears in the merged form, as in 'Farewel, cosyn' (ShipT VII 264). It is also used to describe prototypical situations of parting, as, for instance, in the Knight's Tale: 'And hoom wente every man the righte way./ Ther was namoore but "Fare wel, have good day!" ' (KnT I 2739–40). After the tournament in which Arcite is mortally wounded, Theseus decrees an end to all hostility and the crowds that have gathered for the tournament and the festivities can now disperse with the routine farewell wishes. The *farewell* formula appears in twenty-one out of seventy-three farewells in the *Canterbury Tales*.

3.2 Identification

The characters very often use nominal terms of address when they greet each other and sometimes also when parting. Chaucer's use of forms of address has often been analysed in connection with politeness or impoliteness (see, for instance, Mazzon 2000; Stévanovitch 2003; and Jucker 2006). Horobin (2007a: 151) draws attention to the way in which the Host, Harry Bailly, addresses his fellow pilgrims with nominal terms of address. For a range of pilgrims he uses the polite *Sir* plus professional name, such as *Sire Knyght*, *Sire Clerk*, *Sire Man of Lawe* or *Sir Parisshe Prest*. But on certain occasions, he drops the polite *Sir* and addresses a pilgrim by his/her professional name

only, such as the Franklin, whom he addresses as 'Frankeleyn' (SqT V 696) when, at the end of the Squire's Tale, he rebukes him for his ramblings. But the Host also uses this form of address in less confrontational situations to characters of lesser social standing, e.g. to the Squire, the Merchant or the Manciple (Horobin 2007a: 151).

In greetings and farewells, I distinguish between several subtypes of nominal terms of address; honorifics, occupations, names, terms of family relation, terms of endearment and terms of abuse. Honorifics comprise forms such as 'sire' (e.g. ShipT VII 215), 'goode sire' (e.g. CYT VIII 1295), 'My righte lady' (FranT V 1311) or 'Madame' (MLT II 732). Occupational terms of address do not occur very often in greetings and farewells, even though they occur elsewhere. Those that do occur are mostly terms designating the noble or clerical rank of the addressee rather than a middle-class profession. Relevant examples are 'Sire knyght' (WBT III 1001), 'my sovereyn lady queene' (WBT III 1048) and 'frere John' (SumT III 2171). These nominal terms of address in greetings, therefore, also serve the purpose of establishing or re-establishing the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee.

Names on their own occur fairly often in greetings and occasionally in farewells. When Absolon visits the blacksmith in order to borrow a ploughshare, he greets him with: 'Undo, Gerveys, and that anon' and – after he has identified himself – he is greeted by: 'What, Absolon! for Cristes sweete tree,/ Why rise ye so rathe?' (MilT I 3765–8). The few instances of terms of occupations mostly occur together with an honorific. Names are sometimes combined with an honorific, as in 'maister Nicholay' (MilT I 3579).

Terms of family relationship are also used in greetings and in farewells, but often they do not denote actual family relations but are expressions of respect or of close friendship. In the Wife of Bath's Tale, for instance, the knight addresses the old hag on their first encounter with the very polite 'My leeve mooder' (WBT III 1005) and, in the Shipman's Tale, the merchant's wife addresses the monk with the words: 'O deere cosyn myn, daun John' (ShipT VII 98).

Terms of endearment and terms of abuse are both creative categories, but their overall frequency is rather low. Absolon, the village dandy in the Miller's Tale, greets Alisoun with the following words: 'What do ye, honycomb, sweete Alisoun,/ My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?/ Awaketh, lemman myn, and speketh to me!' (MilT I 3698–700). In the Reeve's Tale, Malyne bids farewell to Aleyn with: 'And, goode lemman, God thee save and kepe!' (RvT I 4247). In the beast fable of the Nun's Priest's Tale, Pertelote, the farmyard hen, addresses her husband, Chauntecleer, as 'Herte deere' (NPT VII 2889) and in the Merchant's Tale, January greets May, his wife, with the words: 'Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!' (MerT IV 2138).

Table 16.2 gives an overview of the frequency of nominal terms of address in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Table 16.2 *Nominal terms of address in greetings and farewells in Chaucer's* Canterbury Tales

	Greetings	Farewells
Honorifics	20	7
Occupation (with honorific)	4 (3)	1 (1)
Names (with honorific)	18 (4)	3 (0)
Family relation	7	4
Terms of endearment	5	2
Terms of abuse	5	0

3.3 Blessings

Taavitsainen (1997a has drawn attention to the co-occurrence of blessings or pious wishes with greetings and other opening phrases in Middle English. She stresses the influence of genre on the choice of formulaic uses. In my data, blessings in greetings and farewells are not as frequent as might have been expected, but they do occur occasionally. The old man in the Pardoner's Tale provides a typical example when he greets the three rioters with the words: 'Now, lordes, God yow see!' (PardT VI 715) or the wife in the Friar's Tale, who greets the summoner with the words: 'benedicitee!/ God save you, sire, what is youre sweete wille?' (FrT III 1584–5). It is perhaps significant that the blessings in both these cases are directed at addressees of very dubious character.

The more elaborate blessings take forms such as 'Fareth now wel. God have yow in his grace' (MerT IV 1688); 'And God be with yow, where ye go or ryde!' (PardT VI 748); or 'God save yow, that boghte agayn mankynde' (PardT VI 766). Several blessings appear at the end of individual tales in which the narrator ends his or her narration with good wishes to the audience. These are not really farewells in the strict sense, as the speaker and addressees do not part, but the formulations suggest a great similarity to actual farewells. The Miller, for instance, finishes with 'This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!' (MilT I 3854) or, in a more elaborate version, the Man of Law: 'And fareth now weel! my tale is at an ende./ Now Jhesu Crist, that of his myght may sende/ Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,/ And kepe us alle that been in this place! Amen' (MLT II 1159–62).

3.4 Interjections

Many greetings and a few farewells are accompanied by interjections, such as *now*, *o*, *what* or *benedicitee*. As in the case of blessings, the choice and meaning of specific interjections also depends to some extent on the genre in which they occur (Taavitsainen 1995b, 1998: 199). In romances of the *Canterbury Tales*, for instance, they are used to convey feelings of despair,

sorrow and regret, but they are also used as foregrounding devices and markers of episode boundaries. In saints' lives, they are used in invocations and prayers. And in the fabliaux, they are mainly used as stereotypical reactions in specific situations. As features of personal affect, they also help to describe the different characters of the *Canterbury Tales* (Taavitsainen 1999). In connection with greetings and farewells, the following are relevant examples. The old man greets the rioters with the words: 'Now, lordes, God yow see!' (PardT VI 715). The merchant's wife greets the monk: 'O deere cosyn myn, daun John' (ShipT VII 98). And the carpenter tries to address Nicholas, who is pretending to be in a stupor and reading the stars: 'What! Nicholay! What, how! What, looke adoun!' (MilT I 3477). These may serve a number of different functions. They can be attention getters or expressions of surprise or they can be what might best be described as discourse-structuring elements, as in the case of *now*.

In some cases there might even be an overlap between the category of blessing and interjection, as in the case of a pious oath (see Taavitsainen 1995a: 448). The old wife in the Friar's Tale greets the summoner with 'benedicitee!/ God save you, sire, what is youre sweete wille?' (FrT III 1584–5), in which the *benedicitee* serves both as an interjection and a pious oath. In the Summoner's Tale, the lord greets the friar with 'Benedicitee!/ What, frere John, what maner world is this?' (SumT III 2170–1).

In farewells, interjections are rare. But Malyne bids farewell to Aleyn with the words: 'Now, deere lemman . . . go, far weel!' (RvT I 4240) or, similarly, the priest to the Canon in the Canon's Yeoman's Tale: 'Now, goode sire, go forth thy wey and hy the' (CYT VIII 1295). In both cases, *now* functions as a discourse marker in the sense of Schiffrin (1987: 228–66). The third farewell that is accompanied by an interjection occurs in the Miller's Tale, where Alison sends away her husband to prepare everything for the impending flood predicted by her lover Nicholas: 'Allas! Go forth thy wey anon,/ Help us to scape, or we been dede echon!' (MilT I 3607–8).

The elements outlined above can occur both in greetings and in farewells. Two further elements, by their very nature, can only occur in farewells. These are the categories of leave-taking and dismissal.

3.5 Leave-taking and dismissal

In farewells, speakers often explicitly take their leave or ask for permission to withdraw. Grisildis, for instance, takes her leave from her husband with the words: 'And heer take I my leeve/ Of yow, myn owene lord, lest I yow greve' (ClT IV 888–9). Sometimes the leave-taking is described without direct speech, as in the Franklin's Tale, 'He taketh his leve' (FranT V 1339) and 'They take hir leve, and on hir wey they gon' (FranT V 1490); or in the Squire's Tale, 'For of hir fader hadde she take leve/ To goon to reste soone after it was eve' (SqT V 363–4).

The last category describes cases in which one of the characters dismisses his or her addressee. In the Shipman's Tale, for instance, the lecherous monk dismisses the merchant's wife with the words: 'Gooth now youre wey, . . . al stille and softe,/ And lat us dyne as soone as that ye may;/ For by my chilyndre it is pryme of day./ Gooth now, and beeth as trewe as I shal be' (ShipT VII 204–7). And in the Miller's Tale, Nicholas dismisses the foolish carpenter: 'Go now thy wey, and speed thee heer-aboute' (MilT I 3562).

On the basis of all these examples from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, it can be concluded that the same general situation obtains as described for other languages and for other varieties of English by the scholars reviewed in the previous section. Greetings and farewells can be brief and formulaic but they can also be creative and they can extend over several turns. I have identified a small range of elements that tend to co-occur with greetings and farewells. These elements can reinforce the phatic nature of the speech act or they can provide additional functions, such as the establishment or re-establishment of social relationships through the use of appropriate terms of address, the structuring of the discourse through the use of discourse markers, or the invocation of pious wishes through the use of blessings.

4. Conclusion

In the frame story of the *Canterbury Tales* virtually all social classes (estates) are represented: the clergy with a prioress, a monk, a summoner, a friar, a pardoner and a parson; the aristocracy with a knight and a squire; and the commons with a miller, a reeve, a cook, a shipman and so on. The diversity of characters in the tales themselves is even richer, with characters both from realistic settings in fourteenth-century England and in fictional settings, such as the court of King Arthur, or even a farmyard with talking and philosophising animals. It is, therefore, not surprising that greetings and farewells also show a great diversity. By and large, they are less routinised and less conventionalised than in Present-day English. Speakers make use of a range of elements that frequently occur both in greetings and in farewells, but none of which seem to be obligatory. The most important elements of greetings and farewells are the formulaic wishes for the addressee and the identification of the addressee through an address term, an honorific or a term of endearment. A blessing is also often used and an enquiry into the addressee's health or his or her family's health. In farewells, the speakers often ask for permission to take their leave or they dismiss their addressee, depending on the situation and the social ranks of the interactants.

The *Canterbury Tales* are a rich source for fictional interactions and conversations, even if 'a single form for the *Tales* will necessarily remain an editorial fiction, and hence the ground of formalist treatments of its text always, to greater and lesser degrees, shaky' (Meyer-Lee 2008: 13; see also Pearsall 1992b). To use these conversations as data for analysis of different

forms of greeting and farewells does not depend on any claims for the unity of this work. Not even the frequency figures provided in tables 16.1 and 16.2 should be interpreted as a claim that the *Canterbury Tales* are somehow a unified and finished set of data. Nevertheless, a pragmatic analysis, like any other linguistic or literary analysis of the *Canterbury Tales*, is deeply indebted to the editors of the modern editions because it relies on their mediating efforts to let Chaucer's work communicate with present-day readers and scholars.